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General Assembly
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Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 10 August 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

As conditions continue to deteriorate dangerously, I am compelled to write to you once again to draw your attention to the ongoing critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and, more specifically, to the grave reality faced by Palestinian civilians as a direct result of the Israeli military occupation.

On 8 August, throughout the night, Israeli occupying forces carried out indiscriminate air strikes across the besieged Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians, including a 23-year-old pregnant woman, Inas Khammash, and her 18-month-old toddler, Bayan Khammash, as they were in their home in Dayr al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. Heavy shelling by Israeli warplanes in various areas in Gaza also resulted in the injury of at least nine other Palestinians. We condemn in the strongest terms these Israeli military attacks on the densely populated Gaza Strip, which are further endangering civilian lives and causing damage and destruction to civilian property, including to a cultural centre that is home to the second largest theatre in Gaza.

The intensification of Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip threatens to further destabilize the situation on the ground and to fully ignite yet another round of deadly violence, which must be avoided at all costs. Such criminal actions by the occupying Power, including the lethal use of force against unarmed civilian protesters, have exacerbated the already severe protection crisis being endured by our people and risk the further ratcheting up of tensions and the destabilization of the situation, which would clearly further threaten international peace and security.

As we have underscored before, such brutal and criminal campaigns against the civilian population of Gaza and Israel's deliberate targeting and killing of Palestinian children are not new, following instead a pattern of wilful killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with total impunity. Clearly, Israel's immoral, inhumane and unlawful actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which the international community must finally and fully hold Israel accountable.

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Israel's ongoing use of lethal force against Palestinian civilians and its cruel and callous disregard for human life were also demonstrated during the Great Return March in Gaza on 3 August, as the occupying Power continued its vicious killing of defenceless peaceful protesters, fatally wounding two Palestinians, 15-year-old Muath Ziad al-Suri and 25-year-old Ahmad Yahiya Atallah Yaghi, and injuring more than 220, including 90 with live ammunition. That brings the total number of Palestinians killed since 30 March to nearly 160, including 23 children, and the total number of injured persons to approximately 15,500.

We recall that Palestinian civilians in Gaza are protesting against the unbearable conditions that the Palestinian people have been facing for the past 70 years, including 70 years of dispossession, a 51-year occupation and more than 11 years of an illegal blockade in Gaza, whereby 2 million civilians — including children, women, men, older persons and sick persons — are trapped in an inhumane situation that affects every single aspect of life. As even more suffering is being inflicted on this vulnerable and besieged population, hopes are further diminishing, and this loss of hope is especially prevalent among our youth.

Against this backdrop of criminal activity in Gaza, the occupying Power also continues its endless provocations and illegal actions against the Palestinian people and their holy sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, further fuelling already high tensions and continuing to destabilize the fragile situation on the ground.

In this regard, on 8 August, Israeli occupying forces shut down the Ibrahimi mosque in Al-Khalil (Hebron) for a period of 24 hours, preventing Palestinian worshippers from entering to worship and banning the Muslim call to prayer, in violation of international law, including the right to freedom of worship and religion, while allowing only Jewish visitors into the Muslim site.

As long as the world remains silent in the face of these flagrant violations, Israel's brutal colonial and discriminatory project against innocent Palestinians will only continue. The killing and injury of Palestinian men, women and children under Israeli occupation, such as the tragic crimes detailed above, must be addressed. We cannot accept, nor should the international community accept, that a people under occupation for more than five decades be left defenceless, denied the protections of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, while the occupying Power is appeased and permitted to continue with its flagrant impunity, disrespecting both the rule of law and the sanctity of human life.

We renew our call to the international community, in particular the Security Council, to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people and the safety and well-being of the defenceless civilian population held captive under an occupation spanning more than half a century, and look forward to the report of the Secretary-General and his proposals on ways and means to provide international protection to the Palestinian people, including through an international protection mechanism, pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20. We reiterate that the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation, including in the Gaza Strip, must be guaranteed protection and cannot remain the exception to the obligations and commitments made to protect civilians in all circumstances from atrocities and flagrant breaches of the law.

We urge all members of the international community and all relevant organizations to intervene immediately and to exhibit the moral and political courage necessary to put an end to Israel's unlawful and immoral behaviour, including the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and the suffocating blockade of Gaza, in blatant violation of the occupying Power's obligations under international law, and to put an end to Israel's long-standing impunity for international crimes.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 643 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 27 July 2018 (A/ES-10/792-S/2018/746), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations